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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUCHAREST 000408

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [SOCI](#) [RO](#)  
SUBJECT: CONTROVERSY OVER MFA OFFICIAL'S STATEMENT ON USE  
OF SHARED MILITARY FACILITIES

Classified By: Ambassador Nicholas Taubman  
for Reasons 1.4 (a), (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) In a response to a question, MFA State Secretary Teodor Baconschi stated during a March 7 Senate joint Foreign Policy and Defense Committee hearing that the U.S.-Romanian Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) could permit U.S. forces to launch a military operation from Romanian territory without consulting Romania. Several Bucharest-based national daily newspapers gave prominent coverage March 8 to Baconschi's (out of context) remark, with one leading newspaper asserting that "the U.S. will be able to launch attacks against any country from our territory without even informing Bucharest."

¶2. (C) Baconschi, during a meeting a few hours after his testimony with visiting Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Pekala, did not explicitly reference this statement. Although he took note of the fact that Romanian senators would call the Foreign and Defense Ministers to testify, he made it clear he remained "optimistic" the Senate would ratify the agreement soon and stressed that a bipartisan parliamentary consensus supports rapid ratification. Earlier the same day before the Senate's hearing, center-left Social Democratic Party (PSD) President and Senate Foreign Policy Committee President Mircea Geoana told the Ambassador and DAS Pekala that the DCA would pass "smoothly" through the Senate's joint Foreign Policy and Defense Committee, but would face more "intense debate" when the Senate as a whole considered ratification. Geoana predicted the Senate would ratify the DCA, despite likely opposition by "extremist" elements. Senate Defense Committee President George-Cristian Maior, whom Geoana described during the meeting as the PSD's "shadow Defense Minister," nodded his assent.

¶3. (SBU) DAS Pekala participated in a March 8 press roundtable with representatives of leading newspapers and press organizations in which he underscored the strength of the U.S.-Romanian alliance; emphasized it was based on consultation and cooperation, not unilateral action; and, that the DCA "fully respects Romanian law" and Romanian sovereignty and was subject to the United Nations charter and other international agreements. DAS Pekala's statements received wide coverage in the March 9 press, with one widely read daily expressing the general tone of reporting with the front-page headline "The U.S. Promises to Consult Bucharest." One prominent editorialist expressed the hope, in an editorial generally critical of the agreement, that the U.S. would, "at least from a military point of view, treat us if not equally, at least with some consideration."

14. (C) During a March 8 lunch meeting with DAS Pekala and DCM, President Basescu's Domestic Policy Counselor Claudiu Saftoiu expressed concern about the brouhaha in the press following Baconschi's statement and stated that the GOR was worried about opposition to the DCA's ratification. He underscored that the Embassy "should do something very visible" to counter the impact of Baconschi's remarks. The next day, an MFA official told DCM that Saftoiu had tasked the Foreign Ministry to prepare an official statement. The Embassy shared points with the MFA for use in preparing this statement and the draft MFA press release, slated for likely release March 9, includes key points provided by the Embassy.

It stresses that the DCA provides for "full respect for the sovereignty of each party...the United Nations charter...and international obligations." The draft statement also notes that the DCA is based upon "reciprocal consultation, not unilateral action" and that the military facilities "remain the property of the Romanian state, respective facilities will be used by (the U.S.) on the basis of prior understanding with the Romanian authorities."

15. (C) Comment. Early indications are that DAS Pekala's March 8 press roundtable provided the necessary antidote to the inflammatory reporting in the press the same day - and March 9 press reports struck a balanced tone, emphasizing the U.S. commitment to consultation with Romania. In post's view, neither Baconschi's statement nor the continuing public affairs hangover of the Teo Peter case appear to have left the DCA's ratification in jeopardy. Geoana, who as Foreign Minister under the former government repeatedly expressed his strong support for a Defense Cooperation Agreement with the U.S., accurately highlighted the abiding bipartisan support for the agreement's ratification. Romanians -- not just the political elites -- remain in favor of a strong partnership between the U.S. and Romania, although as Basescu's advisor

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reminded Pekala, Romanian popular support could not be taken for granted. "You Americans have the best public relations in the world," Saftoiu commented, "but you need to do more of it here." End Comment.

16. (U) AmEmbassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website:

[www.state.gov/eur/Bucharest](http://www.state.gov/eur/Bucharest)

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